

What You Need to Know about Personal Web Sites

What Can You Do?: Action Steps for Families



Personal Information

- Explain to your kids that anyone can access the information they put on a personal Web site. Just as you tell your children not to give personal information to strangers, they should understand that people on the Internet are strangers so they should not provide them with personal information either.
- Explain to your kids what is considered personal information that they should not include on a Web site (name, telephone number, street address, e-mail address, family information, distinguishing personal features).
- Ensure you and your children understand how easily predators can track people down with minimal information from a personal Web site.
- Ask your kids if they have a personal Web site. If you think your children have a Web site, but will not discuss it with you, talk to a computer-savvy friend to learn how you can find out about the site. They may suggest you use a search engine to search your child's name, your phone number, their school name, or their friends' names for potential links to a site. You can also talk to the parents of your children's friends and see if they know anything about personal Web sites the kids may have.
- Set family computer use guidelines.
- Inquire about purchasing the Web Wise Kids "Missing" game for further reinforcement about Internet and personal Web site safety. The game is good for both children and adults. To learn more about the game, view the "Missing Game" document in the Resources and Links section of this program.

Information that can get your children in trouble

- Ensure your kids are aware what is appropriate information to post to a personal Web site and what is not appropriate. Also help them understand the potential consequences for posting inappropriate information to a personal Web site.
- Set family computer use guidelines.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Learn as much as you can about your computer and the World Wide Web. The more you know, the more you will be able to protect your children from Internet predators or Internet crime. You can do this by talking to a computer-savvy friend, taking another computer course, or gathering information from Web sites such as www.getnetwise.org/, www.safetyed.org/, www.netlingo.com, or www.protectkids.com/.
- Talk to your kids about the Internet and personal Web sites. Asking them to teach you about Web sites they may or may not have will help you learn more about them. It will also make your kids think it is "cool" that, when it comes to creating Web sites, they know more about them than you.
- Move the computer into a public area in your home (living room, kitchen, open area) so you can easily see what your children are doing on the computer.
- Set up a computer contract between you and your kids. Refer to the Resources and Links section to create a contract. The following are some things you should include:
 - o Agree to the hours and purpose of computer use.
 - o Have your children agree to talk to you if anyone approaches them online.
 - o Agree to talk to you or another trusted adult about things they might feel uneasy about online.
 - o Assure your kids you won't overreact when they talk to you about something they did wrong or something that has happened as a result of their Internet activity.
 - o Have them promise to never give out personal information online (name, address, phone number, parents name, pictures, etc.).
 - o Have them promise to never meet someone in person they met online without a trusted adult present.
 - o Have them promise to talk to you or another trusted adult before creating or posting anything to a personal Web site.